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ABSTRACT

To address rural schools' growing need for teachers who can teach in both elementary and special education, Arkansas College has begun a 4-year program of dual certification that will prepare teachers for elementary and special education assignments. Serving a largely rural area, Arkansas College has first hand experience with the problems facing rural schools and is especially sensitive to their needs. The college began to study the dual certification option because of repeated requests from area schools to provide teachers with the training to teach proficiently in more than one area. Many of these rural schools do not need a full-time special education teacher, but do need a teacher who can teach in this area for a portion of the day and at the same time have the training to work in another area for the balance of the day. Dual certification training will not only increase the regular teacher's effectiveness--the special education teacher will also be better prepared to work with students in the mainstream. Such teachers will know what the regular education teacher expects from the student and will better understand how to make the transition between regular and special education experience. A summary of public schools in a 10-county area and a sample academic program check sheet are attached. (JHZ)

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A Timely Option for Rural Education: Dual Certification for Special/ Elementary Education

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Mid-America ATE
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Abstract

Rural schools comprise 67% of all schools in the United States. One third of all students live in rural America. A predominant number of teacher education preparation programs do not adequately prepare teachers to meet the unique challenges of teaching in rural areas. This paper describes one school's effort to address the increasing need across this country for teachers who can teach both in special and elementary education.

"A Timely Option for Rural Education: Dual Certification for Special/Elementary Education"

INTRODUCTION

An important role teacher educators play in our society is to stay abreast of the current needs of our local school systems. Rural schools comprise 67% of all schools in the United States. One third of all students live in rural America. These schools are an important part of the culture of the rural family structure. Rural areas pose unique challenges for schools such as high transportation costs, difficulties of obtaining specialized services and low tax bases. Across the nation, one particularly acute problem for rural schools is a personnel shortage. A predominant number of teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare teachers to meet the unique challenges of teaching in rural areas. The majority of state certification laws do not recognize this unique personnel need of rural areas.

This dual certification option is the result of community interest and the need for teachers who are capable of teaching in either the special education or regular education classrooms.

THE SCHOOL

Arkansas College is a private, independent, church-related, liberal arts college. It is a college of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and it is the oldest continuously-operated private college in Arkansas. It has an

enrollment of approximately 725, and it is primarily a residential school. The college is located in Batesville, Arkansas, which has a city population of 8,500 with the surrounding county population of 31,000, and a surrounding counties trade area of 87,000. The teacher education program graduates approximately 30 students per year.

THE COMMUNITY

In the geographic area served by Arkansas College there are numerous small public school systems (see Appendix I). These schools need teachers who can teach in more than one area of certification. In very few other areas of certification are there as many available employment opportunities as there are today in the field of Special Education. One study by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services of the U.S. Department of Education revealed that approximately 57,250 additional teachers are needed to provide special education for all school-age children and youth who require it. Arkansas College is initiating an option for students to become certified in both special education and elementary education through a dual, four year program.

Ferrara, Hirshoren, Levin (1983) determine that one of the most difficult problems facing state education agencies is that of providing for special education services in rural areas. Resistance to change, funding, and distances between schools are major obstacles to providing special education services in rural schools. Rural schools report that the recruiting and retaining of qualified staff are significant impediments to providing services (Helge, 1983).

MEETING THE TRAINING PROBLEM

One reason for poor staff retention in rural areas is the inappropriate preservice training many teachers receive. With the increased trend toward mainstreaming our special education population, many teachers are often required to serve a population for which they have little or no training (Bullock, 1985; Ferrara, et. al. 1983).

To remedy this deficit in instructional training we have historically relied heavily on inservice programs to train teachers how to work with special needs students. Seldom has this "first aid" approach worked. Instead a well planned curriculum with thorough instruction needs to be implemented at the preservice training level.

Sesow and Adams' (1982) research indicated a positive correlation between the amount of special education training and positive attitudes about mainstreaming. The students surveyed felt competent in their preparation to teach special children when they had received sufficient coursework instruction in that area. Flynn, et al. (1978) in a follow up study of their education graduates found that even those teachers who felt a need for further special education course work were reluctant to return to college for that training. Thus without appropriate preservice coursework, many regular educators lack the appropriate training to work with the special education population which they will face in their classrooms (Bullock, 1985).

Attitudes of regular teachers are key variables to successful mainstreaming. The teachers' perception of competency is the key to their

attitudes (Leyser & Abrams, 1983, Leyser, Abrams, Lipscomb, 1982; Sesow & Adams, 1982). The more "prepared" a teacher feels to teach special students, the more positive their attitudes. The importance for thorough teacher preparation cannot be underestimated. The dual certification option is one means by which both regular and special education teachers can become better teachers.

The dual certification training will not only increase the regular teachers effectiveness, but also the special education teachers will be better prepared to work with students in the mainstream. They will know what the regular education teacher expects from the student and can better understand how to make the transition between regular and special education a successful experience. This makes one large step toward the merger of special and regular education as suggested in the literature (Stainback and Stainback, 1984).

Arkansas College began the study of this dual certification option because of repeated requests from area schools to provide teachers with the training to teach proficiently in more than one area. Last year within a 30 mile radius of Arkansas College six special education teaching positions became available. Many of our rural schools desperately need the flexibility to utilize teachers in more than one teacher area (Carlsen and Dunne, 1981). Many do not need a full time special education teacher, but instead a teacher who can teach in this area for a portion of the day and at the same time have the training to work in another area for the balance of the day. Arkansas College is working with this certification option to link special education with elementary education (Appendix II).

The students who attend Arkansas College want to become as employable as is possible in a four year program. This dual option allows them this opportunity.

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APPENDIX I
Summary of Public Schools in Ten-County Area

Sharp County	Cave City	Evening Shade	Highland	Williford	Poughkeepsie
Area Square Miles	184	94	261	142	82
Average Daily Attendance	979	278	1,151	310	130
Average Daily Transported	850	190	1,149	290	126
No. Masters Degree Teachers	15.0	5.5	20.3	7.0	0.5
Expense per ADA	$ 1,750	$ 1,886	$ 1,658	$ 1,669	$ 2,086
Average Teachers Salary	$18,443	$16,781	$15,316	$15,963	$16,564

Stone County	Mountain View	Stone Co.	Fifty-Six	Rural Special
Area Square Miles	277	85	119	120
Average Daily Attendance	955	225	129	234
Average Daily Transported	812	212	96	228
No. Masters Degree Teachers	26.9	6.0	3.0	3.0
Expense per ADA	$ 1,628	$ 2,123	$ 2,461	$ 1,921
Average Teachers Salary	$17,538	$17,286	$16,723	$18,608

Van Buren County	Alread	Clinton	Scotland	Shirley	Southside
Area Square Miles	98	238	136	92	113
Average Daily Attendance	113	927	139	515	477
Average Daily Transported	110	758	130	478	461
No. Masters Degree Teachers	2.0	13.0	1.0	11.0	11.0
Expense per ADA	$ 2,910	$ 1,460	$ 2,456	$ 1,720	$ 1,675
Average Teachers Salary	$15,887	$17,126	$15,956	$15,820	$17,396

White County	Bald Knob	Beebe	Bradford	Central	Griffithville	Judsonia	Kensett	McRae	Pangburn
Area Square Miles	178	196	88	60	87	25	15	46	134
Average Daily Attendance	1,336	1,562	584	468	171	491	522	307	550
Average Daily Transported	904	927	441	419	147	377	241	160	421
No. Masters Degree Teachers	16.5	23.3	8.5	4.7	3.5	7.0	8.5	5.0	2.8
Expense per ADA	$ 1,664	$ 1,508	$ 1,635	$ 1,633	$ 2,478	$ 1,802	$ 1,588	$ 1,752	$ 1,721
Average Teachers Salary	$17,875	$17,569	$17,616	$17,246	$15,066	$17,112	$18,141	$15,923	$18,769

White County (Continued)	Rose Bud	Searcy
Area Square Miles	116	289
Average Daily Attendance	471	2,657
Average Daily Transported	446	1,735
No. Masters Degree Teachers	6.0	49.4
Expense per ADA	$ 1,703	$ 1,557
Average Teachers Salary	$17,454	$16,458

Woodruff County	Augusta	Cotton Plant	McCrory
Area Square Miles	221	142	178
Average Daily Attendance	842	387	896
Average Daily Transported	341	99	598
No. Masters Degree Teachers	16.0	9.5	11.5
Expense per ADA	$ 1,682	$ 1,942	$ 1,561
Average Teachers Salary	$15,248	$13,903	$17,535

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APPENDIX II
ACADEMIC PROGRAM
CHECK SHEET
B.A.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION/SPECIAL EDUCATION
1986-87

Name _____
Catalog Year _____

CORE CURRICULUM — 25 Credits

T.C.	Req.		
___	1	Cor 100	Personal Develop. Seminar
___	3	Eng 101	Freshman Composition I
___	3	Eng 102	Freshman Composition II
___	1	Ped 100	Physical Fitness I
___	1	Ped 101-120	Any Activity Courses
___	3	Rph 200	Intro to the Bible
___	3	Eng 223 or 224	Masterpieces of the Western World I & II
___	3	Pls 101	U.S. Gov't in Perspective
___	3	Sci 100	Biology
___	4	Sci 110	Physical Science

OTHER LIBERAL ARTS REQUIREMENTS — 39 Credits

___	3	Sci 314 or Eco 311 (ED 311 or 314 Geography)	
___	3	ENG	Speech correction or a [language development] course
___	3	PED 340	Adaptive Physical Education
___	3	PSY 310	Developmental Psychology I
___	3	PSY 311	Development Psychology II
___	3	PSY 330	Behavior Modification
___	3	Sth 101	Basic Speech Communication
___	3	Psy 101	Intro to Psychology
___	3	PE 202	Health & Safety
___	3	His 250 or 251	U.S. History
___	3	ART 270	Art for Elem Teachers
___	3	MUS 227	Music for the Grades
___	3	Psy 302	Ed Psychology

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION COURSE REQUIREMENTS — 39 Credits

T.C.	Req.		
___	3	ED 200	Math for Elem Teachers
___	3	ED 201	Science for Elem Teachers
___	3	ED 207	Econ for Elem Teachers
___	3	ED 300	School & Society
___	3	ED 312	Children's Literature
___	3	ED 313	Teaching Social Studies
___	3	ED 315	Elementary Methods
___	3	ED 316	Reading Methods
___	3	ED 317	Diag. of Reading
___	3	ED 318	T. Language Arts
___	3	ED 342	Math Methods
___	6	ED 442	Directed Teaching

SPECIAL EDUCATION COURSE REQUIREMENTS — 18 Credits

___	3	SPE 270	Intro to Exceptional Children
___	3	SPE 343	Characteristics of the Mildly Handicapped
___	3	SPE 346	Methods & Materials for Exceptional Children
___	3	SPE 428	Evaluation of Exceptional Children
___	6	SPE 443	Directed Practicum

GENERAL ELECTIVES (Credits to total 128)

Endorsement/s _____

___	___	_____
___	___	_____
___	___	_____
___	___	_____
___	___	_____

Please note: If you plan to teach in the elementary school you are not required to complete: Mth. 101, His. 210 and His. 211.